

CLAIMS:

1. For use in conjunction with a video encoding/decoding technique wherein images are encoded using truncatable image-representable signals in bit plane form, the method comprising the steps of:

selecting a number of bitplanes to be used in a prediction loop; and

producing an alignment parameter in a syntax portion of an encoded bitstream that determines the alignment of bitplanes with respect to the prediction loop.

2. The method as defined by claim 1, wherein said alignment is a variable parameter.

3. The method as defined by claim 1, further comprising the step of providing a decoder for decoding said encoded bitstream.

4. The method as defined by claim 3, wherein said step of providing a decoder includes providing a decoder that is operative in response to said alignment parameter to align decoded bit planes with respect to a prediction loop.

5. The method as defined by claim 1, wherein said encoding/decoding technique comprises a fine granularity scaling encoding/decoding technique.

6. The method as defined by claim 5, wherein said fine granularity scaling encoding/decoding technique is MPEG-4 fine granularity scaling.

7. The method as defined by claim 6, further comprising repeating said selecting and producing steps for a number of frames of a video signal.

8. For use in conjunction with a video encoding/decoding technique wherein image frames are encoded using truncatable image-representable signals in bit plane form, and subsequently decoded with a decoder, a method comprising the steps of:

selecting a number of bitplanes to be used in a prediction loop; and

producing an encoded bitstream for each frame that includes an alignment parameter which determines the alignment of bitplanes with respect to the prediction loop.

9. The method as defined by claim 8, wherein said frames are frames of macroblocks, and wherein said step of producing an alignment parameter includes producing an alignment parameter for said macroblocks.

10. The method as defined by claim 9, wherein said alignment parameters are variable parameters.

11. The method as defined by claim 10, wherein said alignment parameters are in the syntax portions of said encoded bitstreams.

12. The method as defined by claim 8, further comprising the step of providing a decoder for decoding said encoded bitstream.

13. The method as defined by claim 11, further comprising the step of providing a decoder for decoding said encoded bitstream.

14. The method as defined by claim 12, wherein said step of providing a decoder includes providing a decoder that is operative in response to said alignment parameter to align decoded bit planes with respect to a prediction loop.

15. The method as defined by claim 13, wherein said step of providing a decoder includes providing a decoder that is operative in response to said alignment parameter to align decoded bit planes with respect to a prediction loop.

16. The method as defined by claim 14, wherein said encoding/decoding technique comprises a fine granularity scaling encoding/decoding technique.

17. The method as defined by claim 15, wherein said encoding/decoding technique comprises a fine granularity scaling encoding/decoding technique.

18. The method as defined by claim 16, wherein said fine granularity scaling encoding/decoding technique is MPEG-4 fine granularity scaling.

19. The method as defined by claim 17, wherein said fine granularity scaling encoding/decoding technique is MPEG-4 fine granularity scaling.

20. For use in conjunction with a video encoding/decoding technique wherein image frames are encoded using truncatable

image-representable signals in bit plane form, and subsequently decoded with a decoder, an apparatus comprising:

means for selecting a number of bitplanes to be used in a prediction loop; and

means for producing an encoded bitstream for each frame that includes an alignment parameter which determines the alignment of bitplanes with respect to the prediction loop.